

Joint C² Through Unity of Command

By K. SCOTT LAWRENCE

Downsizing the defense establishment is putting a tremendous strain on the ability to wage two nearly simultaneous regional conflicts. The force structure proposed in the Bottom-Up Review along with continuing fiscal pressure point to further reductions in combat capability. In the midst of this unprecedented scale-down the roles and missions of the Armed Forces are being scrutinized. Each service, along with the Joint Staff, has rewritten key warfighting doctrine over the last several years. Since total obligation authority is on the line, service doctrine inevitably focuses on how to organize and fight independently. The Armed Forces have yet to come up with a coherent doctrine that can fuse individual service attributes into a coordinated joint warfighting machine. Unity of command in a joint doctrinal framework is the key to an integrated yet simple command and control structure, which is needed to achieve initiative, agility, depth, synchronization, and versatility on the battlefield. The following discussion uses principles established in component service doctrine to develop a joint command and control structure at the strategic and operational level that emphasizes unity of command.

To understand unity of command, it is important to review the evolution of the concept in doctrinal circles, especially in recent years. In 1986 Army Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, stated, "for every objective, ensure unity of effort under a responsible commander. This principle ensures that all efforts are focused on a common goal."¹ This definition concentrates on the *objective*

and recognizes the need for unity of command in realizing unity of effort. The new FM 100-5 defines the principle of war to be "for every objective, seek unity of command and unity of effort."² This new definition puts unity of effort on an equal footing with unity of command. The emphasis is on seeking unity of command, not ensuring unity of effort through unity of command. FM 100-5 still accepts that unity of command "requires a single commander with the requisite authority to direct all forces in pursuit of a unified purpose." It goes on to stipulate:

Unity of effort . . . requires coordination and cooperation among all forces—even though they may not necessarily be part of the same command structure—toward a commonly recognized objective. Collateral and main force operations might go on simultaneously, united by intent and purpose if not command. . . . In combined and interagency operations, unity of command may not be possible, but the requirement for unity of effort becomes paramount.

This paragraph contains some significant misperceptions. Emphasis has now shifted from ensuring unity of effort under a single commander to permitting "intent and purpose" to replace a single commander. Army doctrine has profoundly shifted in its definition of that principle of war known as unity of command. The final draft of Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, had an identical definition: "For every objective, seek unity of command and unity of effort."³ In the final version of the publication (September 1993) the definition was changed to read:

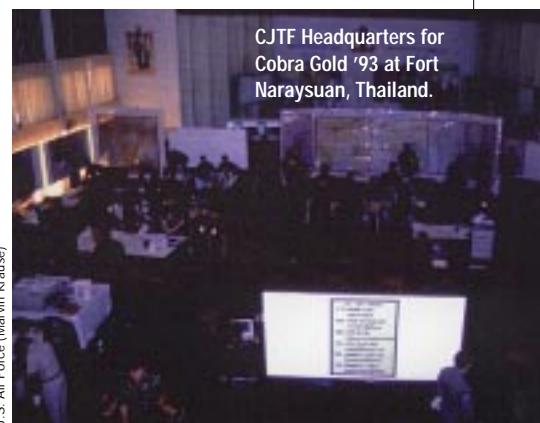
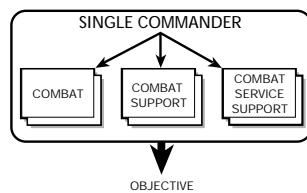
Ensure unity of effort under one responsible commander for every objective. . . . Unity of effort, however, requires coordination and cooperation among all forces toward a commonly recognized objective, although they are

not necessarily part of the same command structure. . . . In multinational and interagency operations, unity of command may not be possible, but unity of effort becomes paramount.

The final version appears to be a compromise in the definition of unity of command and its relation to unity of effort. It is a shift in doctrine but not as profound as that found in FM 100-5. Air Force Manual 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, adopts almost the same definition as the 1986 edition of FM 100-5: "Ensure unity of effort for every objective under one responsible commander."⁴

In war there are multiple elements of combat, combat support, and combat service support directed at a common objective under a single commander (as shown in figure 1) who ensures that the objective is understood through his intent and mission orders. A commander articulates objectives to subordinates and ensures they understand how these objectives

Figure 1



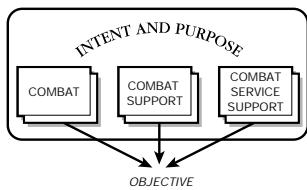
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Figure 2



work together to accomplish the battle plan. A commander's intent provides the framework for resolving conflicts that arise in the course of battle and steers subordinates toward solutions that meet objectives.

In this evolving notion of unity of command unity of effort is achieved by an overarching "intent and purpose" (figure 2). But who resolves differences in an element's perceptions, intent, and purpose? Who ensures that perceptions do not change as a conflict progresses? What is the main effort? Without unity of command, unity of effort is never ensured—left to chance, hope, and luck. In the fog of war nothing as critical to an objective as unity of effort should be trusted to anything but a single responsible commander. This is a principle of war.

Unity of command "ensures that all efforts are focused on a common goal."⁵ At theater level a single commander—a CINC or JFC—is

needed to control all combat, combat support, and combat service support forces in order to ensure unity of effort. A JFC normally names a single air, land, and sea commander to control forces fighting in their respective media (see figure 3). Justifying unity of command along service component lines is primarily based on the concept of inherent expertise. It is thought that to fully exploit the combat potential of a service, forces must remain under a single component commander who is specifically trained to employ forces in a given medium. Since service component lines—or the medium in which they are employed—are not objectives, they should not be the primary criterion by which unity of operational command is established.

A JFC must ensure unity of command while maintaining a reasonable span of control. And according to Joint Pub 3-0, the theater area of operations (AO) comprises three types of operations, deep, close, and rear, around which the AO should be divided (figure 4). The areas are oriented on missions and an enemy and provide a basis for structuring theater command and control where unity of command should be focused. Visualizing major areas assists a JFC in stating the mission and

defining strategic and operational requirements to meet campaign objectives. At theater level, a JFC provides unity of command and assures forces are employed in a coordinated manner. Below theater level, a JFC will task component commanders with clear and concise campaign objectives that can be achieved using assets under their respective control.

In a developed integrated land-sea-air theater, the Air Combat Command (ACC) span of control is too broad to directly control all air forces. Centralizing air tasking order (ATO) planning and command and control of air operations in the Air Operations Center creates a vulnerability that can be exploited by an enemy. According to Air Force Manual 1-1, "Delegation of control reduces the

complexity of the problem an air component commander faces by keeping span of control more in harmony with situational awareness. Moreover, delegation has the advantage of reducing the enemy's ability to create friction by attacking the organization exercising control."⁶

ACC must structure command and control, using subordinate commanders to create an optimum span of control over theater air assets. The subordinate's responsibilities must be drawn to ensure focused objectives, clear responsibilities, and a manageable span of control. The interdependence of targets in the theater deep and defense of the theater rear creates interwoven objectives. To ensure unity of effort, ACC should designate a commander with primary responsibility for theater deep battle and overland theater rear battle. This position can be called the strategic air division (AD) commander. It is also imperative that ACC designate an air commander with operational level focus and primary responsibility in the theater close battle. This position can be called the operational AD commander as depicted in figure 5.

Targets in the theater deep are at the heart of an enemy's warmaking potential. Destroying them can cause an enemy decisionmaker to fail in the conduct of a campaign and can undermine enemy morale and leadership credibility. The targets include air forces, strategic weapons, and strategic reserves; command, control, and communications centers and power and transportation systems; and targets whose destruction has more long-term effects, such as manufacturing systems, sources of raw materials, and critical stockpiles. ACC would have authority to allocate theater deep assets to strategic ADs based upon the

Figure 3

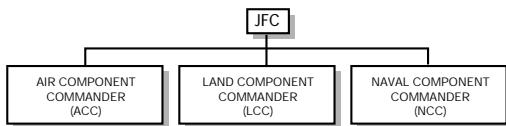


Figure 4

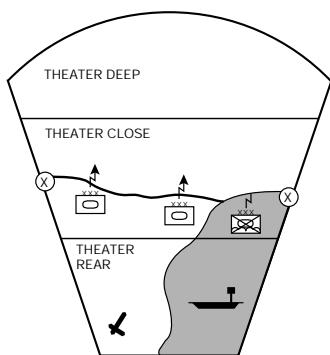
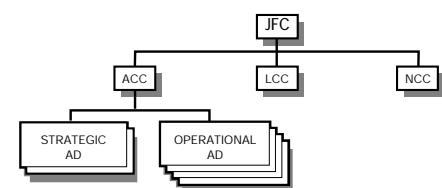


Figure 5

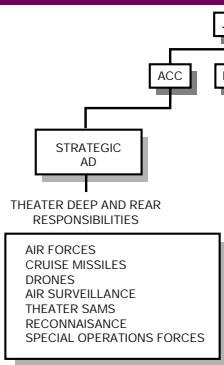


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ater campaign objectives and JFC intent. The strategic AD projects power into the theater deep against an enemy's key military and economic power base. Army and naval aviation, surface-to-surface and cruise missiles, drones, etc., allocated for operations in the theater deep area, are planned and coordinated with the strategic AD commander as well as Special Operations Forces and surface reconnaissance forces. The ability of the commander to coordinate the planning and execution of all assets projected into the theater deep area will ensure maximum synergism and economy of force.

Controlling the air over the theater rear is critical to a JFC's strategic maneuver potential. The primary threat to the rear is aircraft and surface-to-surface missiles (SAMs), many of which are projected from the theater deep. Area defense is provided by defensive counter-air aircraft, SAMs, and antiaircraft artillery, as well as counter-offensive action against the theater deep. The requirement for air and missile forces to coordinate defense of the theater rear makes it prudent to have a single commander controlling all forces directly defending the theater rear area. ACC would have authority to allocate theater rear assets to strategic ADs based on theater campaign objectives and a JFC's intent. Theater Army aviation, theater air defense missile systems, surface air defense radars, etc., employed for defense of the theater rear area, are planned and coordinated through the strategic AD commander (see figure 6).

Figure 6

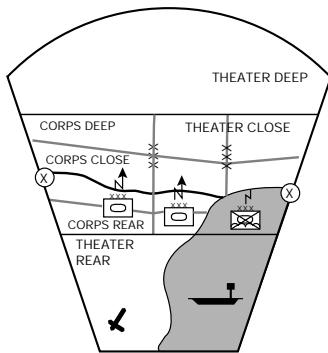


A strategic AD commander is subordinate to composite wings (CW), theater air defense (TAD) brigades, and theater deep and rear intelligence assets. The strategic AD will task-organize forces to achieve theater deep and rear objectives. A command element such as a composite wing will serve as a strategic AD subordinate command to execute theater deep operations. A TAD brigade will be a strategic AD subordinate command to execute theater rear operations. Mission orders pass sequentially from the JFC to ACC and strategic AD and then on to the CW and TAD brigade. A strategic AD commander with clear area boundaries and objectives ensures great flexibility and coordination.

In a developed theater, land forces tend to be the primary combat forces operating in the theater close area. Theater close battle operations are focused on destruction of the enemy, with the final objective many times being to gain or maintain territory. In this developed scenario, the land component commander (LCC) provides the vision and concept of operations necessary to win the decisive battle. The land commander must fight to the depth of his weapons to properly shape the battle, destroy the enemy, and retain or gain the initiative. Air operations must be integrated with land operations and closely coordinated to ensure the synchronization needed to attain maximum combat power. Confidence in air operations and timing between air strikes and ground maneuver are critical to gain maximum synergism. LCC can then confidently maneuver at the greatest speed, and preserve firepower and critical logistical resources. The interdependence of mission objectives and need for all forces to be closely coordinated to attain maximum combat power makes it prudent to have a single commander over all forces employed in the theater close battle.

LCC divides the theater close battle into subordinate AOs (figure 7). The corps commander uses deep battle to shape the battlefield for his divisions. The extent to which the battlefield is nonlinear is driven by the corps commander's ability to

Figure 7



fight and shape the deep battle while rapidly exploiting openings.⁷ Command and control measures, which delineate a commander's area of responsibility, are critical to coordinate and deconflict deep fires and maneuver between echelons of command. The placement of the corps outer boundary is dependent on mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time available (METT-T); it must be far enough out to allow the corps commander to shape his close battle. Outer boundary placement is METT-T dependent, although the range of deep fires, intelligence capability, and enemy forces are driving factors in ultimate placement. The corps outer boundary defines a corps restrictive fire control measure, which requires other command echelons to coordinate with corps to fire inside the boundary.

The ability of corps deep attack assets to effectively mass and synchronize will depend on the extent they are integrated into the ground scheme of maneuver. This will be the result of unity of command in the corps deep battle. Unity of effort within the corps AO requires the commander to have operational control over all combat, combat support, and combat service support assets required to accomplish the mission. The corps close battle already has unity of command with divisions dividing areas of responsibility. The majority of deep attack assets that the corps uses to shape the close battle belongs to air forces. Therefore, it is prudent to establish an operational

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air division commander with command of Air Force assets and operational control over other assets employed in the corps deep battle. This operational AD commander is under command of ACC and works directly under the operational control of the corps commander, ensuring unity of effort in the corps deep area as shown in figure 8.

The operational AD commander is directly responsible to the corps commander, who writes mission orders and provides guidance on shaping corps deep battle, supporting the close battle, and defending the corps rear. ACC allocates air forces to the operational AD based upon theater campaign objectives, JFC's intent, and coordination with corps and LCC. The operational AD will plan and coordinate all corps deep fires to include all air allocated by ACC, corps Army aviation, long-range artillery, drones, corps deep battle reconnaissance, et al. In addition to deep fire assets, most corps rear defense forces would be placed under the operational AD commander to include air forces, corps Army aviation, radar, SAMs, et al. The operational AD commander controls the air over the corps AO and coordinates all corps level air resupply through tactical airlift or helicopter.

Subordinate to the operational AD commander and under his operational control would be a composite wing commander, corps air division artillery (ADA) brigade commander, a deep fire cell formed by the corps artillery commander, and corps deep and rear intelligence assets. The deep fire cell would be formed from corps artillery assets, have a senior artillery officer, and

Figure 8

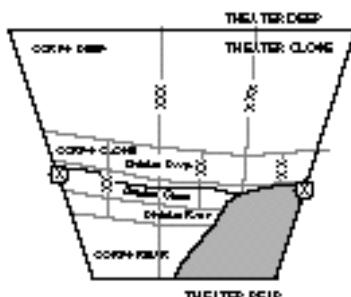
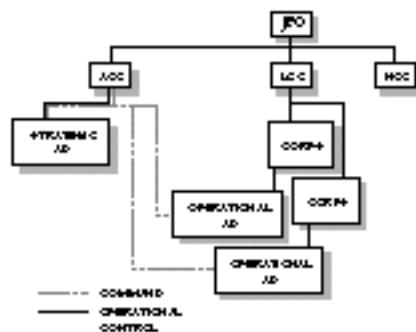


Figure 9



employ long-range corps artillery assets under direction of the operational AD. The operational AD would use CWs to execute corps deep operations and elements under the ADA brigade to execute corps rear operations. Mission orders would pass sequentially from JFC to LCC, corps, and operational AD, and then to CW, ADA brigade, and deep fire cell. This level of unity of command enhances the synergistic effects between operational fires and the ground scheme of maneuver.

In the initial stages of a conflict Navy and Marine forces operating in a littoral or near land area are a forward presence and a direct deterrent. If a conflict escalates these assets provide enabling forces to secure forward operating bases. The Navy component commander assigns a strategic AD commander to fight the theater deep and rear battle. A Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) commander could be assigned to fight the theater close battle. The MAGTF Aviation Combat Element commander accomplishes operational AD responsibilities. As a conflict escalates, naval aviation, long-range bombers, and surface-to-surface missiles attack critical strategic nodes, destroying command and control and denying long-term logistical support to an enemy. With forces directly off-shore, high operational tempo would be sustained while attacking targets inside an enemy's decision loop. Unity of command in the theater deep battle would ensure synergistic effects that force an enemy to reach a culminating point earlier, permitting successful amphibious operations and providing critical time to

deploy, stage, and disperse air-land-sea forces in theater.

The key to success in future joint operations will be the ability to synergistically prosecute the war throughout the depth of the theater. This ability begins by assuring unity of command at all command echelons, providing explicit clean lines of command and communication, and by focused, coordinated objectives. As the force structure shrinks, component services cannot afford to fight inefficient parallel campaigns. The United States may have had the luxury, due to overwhelming firepower, of employing combat forces less efficiently in past wars; now the move must be made toward more jointness to retain the same effectiveness with fewer forces. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ Army Field Manual 100-5, *Operations* (Washington: Department of the Army, May 1986), p. 175.

² Army Field Manual 100-5, *Operations* (Washington: Department of the Army, June 1993), p. 2-5.

³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, proposed final draft (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, September 1993), p. A-3.

⁴ Air Force Manual 1-1, vol. 2, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force* (Washington: Department of the Air Force, March 1992), p. 12.

⁵ Army Field Manual 100-5 (May 1986), p. 175.

⁶ Air Force Manual 1-1, vol. 2, p. 131. Martin Van Creveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 265-67, 270, 274 is cited in the manual to support this statement.

⁷ Army Manual, *Corps Deep Operations Tactics Techniques and Procedures Handbook* (Washington: Department of the Army, 1990), p. 1-2.